

Learn-to-Fish License Waiver

What it is:

A waiver of the fishing license requirement for a **one-time, one-day** fishing opportunity tied to an **educational fishing program** such as the Department of Natural Resources Angler Education Program or a school-based program that covers a range of topics including skills, fish biology, and habitat investigation.

What it is not:

A waiver for schools, organizations and businesses to take groups fishing for free, just for fun. Fishing is indeed fun; that's why so many people do it. It's also a privilege and in order to maintain the fishery we need to sell fishing licenses that allow people the right to exercise the privilege. You want to have fun? Go buy a fishing license! ☺

Requirements:

- 🐟 Participants must be novices, that is, people who have less than two years of fishing experience.
- 🐟 Mentors, the adults instructing or teaching the activity, must have fishing licenses.
- 🐟 During the fishing activity there shall be no more than three novice participants per mentor.
- 🐟 Participants must be engaged in a minimum of **four hours** of classroom and field instruction prior to the fishing activity. This is in addition to the fishing outing.
- 🐟 All participants, mentors and volunteers must comply with fishing regulations.
- 🐟 Mentors must not have a criminal record or have been convicted of a conservation violation within the five years previous to the fishing activity.
- 🐟 Non-licensed volunteers may assist, but will need to be enrolled as a novice participant if they fish.
- 🐟 Landowners must be notified if you are fishing from private land. (As a courtesy, notification of public park managers is advised.)
- 🐟 A written course outline must accompany the application.
- 🐟 Parts 1 and 2 of the application and the written course outline must be submitted to the DNR 30 days prior to the fishing outing.
- 🐟 Parts 3 and 4 of the application must be submitted to the DNR two weeks prior to the outing. It's a good idea to list a rain date.
- 🐟 Applications are approved by local fisheries experts and conservation wardens.
- 🐟 Mentors must have the approved application in hand the day of the fishing outing.

Too much Trouble? There is an alternative!

You could have the kids buy a fishing license! ☺

Getting in the habit of buying a license is the best way to make life-long anglers. Too expensive? Not really. An important part of any Learn-to-Fish program should include how fisheries are managed, restored and maintained. It doesn't happen on its own and it's not cheap. That's why the Department of Natural Resources sells fishing licenses. Oftentimes when something is free, it's devalued. It's helpful for anglers, young and old, beginning and seasoned to understand what it takes to manage a resource. Once they do they'll realize what a bargain they're getting.

Part of your program should include a cost comparison of what one can buy for the cost of a youth license available to 16 and 17 year-olds. One night at the movies, one night at the burger joint, half a CD, 1/10 of a pair of sneakers, 365 days of fishing . . . Such a deal!

Parents know how fast teens burn through money. They're also used to having to send money to school for various field trips and enrichment programs. Let parents know up front that their child will be expected to get a fishing license as part of the course. It could be a homework assignment or you could plan a field trip to the local tackle shop or hardware store to make the purchase as a group. The shopkeeper will be delighted to have your class come for a visit and see the dazzling array of lures, jigs, spoons and fishing gadgetry.

On the other hand, purchasing a license may be tough for some families. You can tap the school's field trip scholarship fund, collect fees from all students able to pay beforehand and pay the vendor all at once - no one needs to know who paid and who received a scholarship. Or, you can fill out the four-page form for the one-day fishing license waiver described on the next page.

Learn-to-Fish License Waiver

Steps in Applying for a Fishing License Waiver

1. Obtain an Application and Authorization Form to Conduct a Learn to Fish Program, DNR form 3600-226. There are four parts to this form; make sure you get all four parts. Forms are available at local DNR Service Centers or the Aquatic Resources Education office. The different parts of the form collect the following information:

Part A - General Information. List organization, leader, type of fishing, etc. This part is due 30 days prior to the outing.

Part B (upper part) – Landowner/Property Manager Authorization. This is important if you plan to launch from or come ashore onto private land and is due 30 days prior to the outing. If using public lands, notify the property manager as a courtesy who may be able to help you with your outing if he or she knows you are coming.

Part B (lower part) – Approval. The local DNR fisheries biologist approves or denies waiver. You must have this approved form in hand on the day of your outing.

Part C – List of Mentors (chaperones). Get commitments from qualified mentors, i.e. people with no criminal record or conservation violations within the past five years, two weeks in advance.

Part D – Reporting Form. This is due two weeks after fishing outing.

Carefully read the application for other requirements.

2. The Learn to Fish program requires that an instructor include an educational component in order to receive a fishing license waiver for his or her group. Submit a course outline with your application indicating hours spent, topics covered and names of instructors. Program should contain a strong emphasis on biology, safety, and outdoor ethics in addition to teaching fishing skills.

3. Submit Parts A and B of the application and course outline to your local DNR fisheries expert 30 days prior to your fishing outing. A copy of Part B will be returned to you upon approval of your application. You need to have this in hand during your outing with your group.

4. Submit Part C to your local DNR fisheries expert at least two weeks prior to your outing. It would be helpful if you could submit it with Parts A and B, but we realize that a 30-day deadline could pose a problem.

5. Submit Part D to your local DNR fisheries expert or the State Aquatic Resources Education Director two weeks after the outing. Failure to submit the reporting form will result in denial of future requests for waivers.

Possible reasons for denial of waiver:

- Resource is stressed due to drought/flood/over-fishing. A group this size would further jeopardize the fishery. Ask biologist to suggest an alternative site.
- Inadequate mentor-to-student ratio.
- Weak lesson plan.
- The course focuses on advanced fishing skills or has been requested for paying customers of a for-profit organization. The rule was intended to provide learning opportunities for novices.
- Failure to submit reporting form from previous outings.
- Participants have been given a waiver before. Have students repeating the course buy a license.